THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) Indian Foreign Secretary visited US in May, 2005 to lead the Indian delegation for the India-US Global Issues Forum. Scientific Advisor to PM visited US in May, 2005 to attend the Annual General Meeting of Industrial Research Institute in Tucson, Arizona. Resumption of bilateral civilian nuclear energy cooperation was discussed during Foreign Secretary's visit.

(b) to (d) Recognizing the significance of civilian nuclear energy for meeting growing global energy demands in a cleaner and more efficient manner, Prime Minister during his recent US visit, discussed with President Bush, India's plans to develop its civilian nuclear energy programme. President Bush conveyed his appreciation to the Prime Minister over India's strong commitment to preventing WMD proliferation and stated that as a responsible State with advanced nuclear technology, India should acquire the same benefits and advantages as other such States. The President told the Prime Minister he would seek agreement from Congress to adjust U.S. laws and policies, and the United States will work with friends and allies to adjust international regimes to enable full civil nuclear energy cooperation and trade with India, including but not limited to expeditious consideration of fuel supplies for safeguarded nuclear reactors at Tarapur. In the meantime, the United States will encourage its partners to also consider India's request for its inclusion in ITER and Generation IV International Forum. The Prime Minister conveyed that for his part, India would reciprocally agree that it would be ready to assume the same responsibilities and practices and acquire the same benefits and advantages as other leading countries with advanced nuclear technology, such as the United States.

Special envoy for release of Indians held in neighbouring countries

1163. SHRI THENNALA G. BALAKRISHNA PILLAI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any demand has been made to appoint a special envoy to negotiate on behalf of Government to secure the release of Indians being held/imprisoned in our neighbouring countries;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government propose to establish/set up an office of special envoy for humanitarian issues;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(e) what measures Government propose to take to secure the release of Indians being held on frivolous charges in neighbouring countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Our Missions and Posts abroad have standing instructions to immediately take up the matter with the host Governments regarding release of Indians held in prisons abroad.

(e) In case the Government comes to know of the arrests of Indians abroad, the Missions concerned are immediately informed and requested to seek consular access, ascertain the reasons for their detention and seek their release. Similarly, Missions also take up the issue *suo moto* with the host Governments for release and thereafter repatriation of the prisoners.

Group D temporary employees in Passport Offices

†1164. SHRI R.S. GAVAI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Group D temporary employees in the Passport Offices in the country, as on date;

(b) whether it is a fact that these employees are working as temporary employees for the last many years;

(c) if so, whether Government propose to take any steps to make these employees permanent;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) there are 394 casual employees working in various Passport Offices as on date;

(b) Yes;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.